The Seed Sower.

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A Child of To-day.

To-day I hear the voice of God,
As in earth's Eden, close to men;
I see, where saints of old have trod,
Our feet can find pure paths again;
I look a moment at their grace,
Admire their faith, their struggles sore,
Then turn determined, in my place,
To reach the life so blest of yore!

Our God is still the God of men,
Our hearts are still his hiding-place,
His word is writ by many a pen,
His spirit breathes through all the race;
And in our upward striving now,
Man's growth of thought and vast desire,
Love's crown is set upon our brow,
Our souls aflame with sacred fire!

New knowledge comes,—it comes as truth;
New duties dawn,—they are our day;
New inspirations thrill our youth,—
They are to us the life, the way.
The Christ reveals himself once more,
And walks with us to vanish not:
Poor fishermen beside the shore,
He enters in our common lot.

He is behind each earnest hope,
Each aim that light or comfort yields;
His gospel has a wider scope;
He sows his seed in broader fields,
Till waste and wilds as gardens grow,
Till deserts drear produce the rose;
While living rivers grandly flow
From creedal mountains' melting snows.

WILLIAM BRUNTON.

Manchester College Pulpit. No. 2.

A SERMON,

BY REV. J. E. ODGERS, M.A.

"Lead us not into temptation."—MATT. vi. 13.

There are probably no words in the Bible so familiar to men and women throughout the whole world as those of the Lord's Prayer. They are used so constantly, and so much from devotional habit, that their full significance is apt to pass unrealized; and indeed, when criticism, of a somewhat captious sort, demands that religious people should know what they are talking about, we feel that we would rather not have the language of these petitions revised and improved, and are quite content to go on using it without undertaking a critical examination for the purpose of discovering whether it does exactly represent what we most want to pray for; whether it is in precise accord with our present day religious conceptions; or whether we could not more accurately express our needs and aspirations in some different form of words. The uplifting of the heart *necessarily* means more than our lips can speak. Our words, even at their best, or the words we may adopt as ours from godly writers or venerable manuals of prayer, are perhaps poor and thin in the ear of God compared with "the groaning which cannot be uttered." In any case, the words are more than all else, a *means* towards spiritual communion with God. We do not always pray the same prayer when we use the same familiar

words; at one time they go from us bearing just the slight touch of seriousness which is all that our passing mood inclines to; at another time the worn and wearied soul finds in them the only speech for which it has strength. In different degrees of intensity, sometimes with glad renewal of old feeling, sometimes with a strange rush of new emotion, we repeat again the words of prayer which have been familiar to us from childhood, and which, perhaps, have come to mean to us just the most simple and natural turning of thought and affection God-ward. Strongly as I contend for the most honest sincerity of speech in times and forms of worship, I cannot criticize a prayer which has become a symbol of personal desire to pray; and when I am told that our prayers do not represent the needs we feel, but those which we sometimes think we ought to feel—that we assume an air of aspiration which is quite foreign to the regular routine of our life and interest, I can only say that I would rather beg

> ". . . for grace from day to day,
> To live more nearly as we pray,"

than for the prosaic veracity to pray more nearly as we live.

But this particular petition, "Lead us not into temptation," has been subjected to criticism, or at least regarded with misgiving, even by religious writers, on two grounds, both of which deserve attention. I have seen it noted as one of the very few passages in the Sermon on the Mount which is not in accord with the highest religious thought of the present day (with a suggestion that perhaps it is an interpolation, and did not really proceed from one who had so exalted a thought of God and His dealings with man as Jesus undoubtedly had), on the ground that God leads no one into temptation. We have not the excuse to allege for our weakness or our fall, that we are exposed *by God* to trials too hard for our strength; nor may we think of Him as trying moral experiments with us. For this view we might allege the pointed words of the Epistle of James (I., 13-14): "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man. But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of *his own lust*, and enticed." I doubt not that this is strictly true. That the temptation *is* a temptation, that we are brought into moral hesitation and wavering by it, is a matter of our own responsibility. If there were no foe within the gates, there would be no danger from the enemy without. There must be something in us to which the temptation speaks; and if it speaks with power and gains compliance, it is because some part of our nature is disloyal to the moral law; our own lusts are not subject to our better will, and there must be no doubt as to who is answerable for the lack of self-control, and the laxity that permits a traitor in the camp. This is a hard saying, perhaps. Paul's disciples found it so. The Apostle himself groaned bitterly over the fact that while with his spirit he would gladly serve the law of God, his lower nature gave the lie to his aspirations, and he was humiliated by being forced to recognise the power which old thoughts and passions still had to bring him once again "under the law of sin and death." But one who recognises, as Paul did, that these temptations come from *below*, and not from *above*, cannot attempt to throw the responsibility for them upon God. When the Corinthians were inclined to complain that God was trying them too fiercely, he tells them "there hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man," is incidental to his nature, lot, and circumstances. (1 Cor. x. 13.) True it is, that God tempteth not any man. But, whether in the course of his providential leading through this world, temptation be not, perhaps necessarily, incidental to our nature, lot, and circumstances, is another matter.

Yes, say the objectors on the other side; God *does lead* us, for our good, into temptation. Only thus does he make men and women of us. Only thus is character formed, and virtue proved, and strength gained. It is timidity, it is ignorance of ourselves and of our highest good—it is the soul that craves indulgence, and is content to forego the excellence that is born of discipline and hardship, that prays "lead us not into temptation." Rather should we quote another passage from the Epistle of James: "Brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations, knowing this, that the trial of your faith worketh patience," endurance, stability. (I., 2, 3.) Virtue that is known only in a theory, morals that bloom only in a conservatory, courage that has never been

put to the test, may turn out to be mere emptiness and delusion. Now, as of old, it is the knowledge of good and evil that is to awaken man from the sleep of childish innocence to the knowledge of his own powers, duties, and responsibilities. As the body can only gain real strength by exercise, so the soul must be hardened by effort and endurance It must cleave to the good, and reject the evil; and to do this, it must actually be within arms' length of the evil; must honestly face its power; must exercise a real judgment, and learn self-mastery by a steady effort of will. Yes; this is true! We cannot award the palm of excellence in cases where we can only speak as to a good set of principles with a set of circumstances specially adapted to their preservation. We fear these exotics would die in the common air. We want to know how a man holds his own in this very mixed, struggling world. We decline to judge character by first appearances, as we want to know of a gun-barrel or a railway-bridge that it has been fully and deliberately tested, even by rather an extra strain, before we place much confidence in either. "Let us be sure," say many thoughtful people, "that God means nothing but our good in the temptations to which he knowingly subjects us; that by them, and by them only, is his discipline for the formation of our characters being carried on. The proof may be hard; but we must have the faith of Job, who says, 'When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as the gold.' For the reinforcement, however, of our personal trust, in time of trial; for the remembrance of the high issues at stake, the high calling to which we may not be unfaithful, we will pray God to grant us the felt companionship of his Spirit." And so they have substituted, as I see, in some printed forms of prayer, for the words of my text, these: "Leave us not in temptation."

I have fully admitted the truth of the ground upon which this latter objection is based. It is only by self-control and self-determination that actual virtue is attained We only practise goodness in its proper sense when we consciously choose it for our guide, and reject the evil or the inferior alternative. Everything good; lovely, and beautiful in this world emerges out of contrasts. When our whole thought and language, nay, our consciousness itself, the development of our senses, and the perceptions that depend upon them, involving all mental progress, are products of such antitheses as those between self and not-self, same and other, near and far, light and darkness, harmony and discord, true and false—it is no wonder that our whole moral nature and conformation—all that we call character—should depend upon the contrast of good and bad. Just as sense, perception, reason, would be kept in an undeveloped babyish stage, if we lived in a world where everything was at precisely the same distance from us, where scenery and surrounding were absolutely uniform, where there was always the same degree of light or darkness, where we always heard the same sounds, listened to the same unvaried teaching, did uninterruptedly and unquestioningly the same things;—so we should never rise to the dignity of moral decision and action, if there were for us no occasion of choice between motives and actions; if the shock of temptation never caused us to find out what spirit we were of; if we had not to test our strength by resistance, and learn steadfastness by the near prospect of a fall. A thing is not *right* unless there is a clear possibility of wrong; action is not distinctly *good*, when there is no possibility, no felt presence, of an evil choice. Where this is absent, there is no moral quality at all, save that which you may attribute to the habit which has become so dominant that the bad alternative had no chance. Then, that was good habit, good training: it belongs to character, has come to be of its very es ence; but character, how constructed? Every brick in its building marks a victory; but now, the persistence of a true and right habit of mind forms so strong a bulwark that the old battles have not to be fought again, and the old temptations make no more impression than the rain-drops.

I believe trial to be as necessary for human character as it is inevitable in human life; and yet I am content to pray—"Lead us not into temptation." I cannot, unmoved, regard the prospect of fierce trial; I would not wantonly seek the chance of falling, just to prove my own steadfastness; and surely in our daily occupations, in business, in social, even in family, life we may find opportunity enough for the schooling and maintenance of character, if indeed we are keeping throughout some sacred thought of duty, some remembrance of a high ideal. We do not expect to be anything heroic, either in

achievement or in resistance; but we find, when we truly judge ourselves, that the daily needs of the struggle against the slavery of habit, the growing power of selfishness, infirmities of temper, danger of waning spirituality, and contented absorption in small and even unworthy interests, involve the exercise of resolution, the testing of faith, the wrestlings of the spirit, and the resisting of the devil. We need a keener perception of the moral significance of the lives we are leading, and the customs we are forming and supporting from day to day. I know not who can look forward with confidence or joy to the shock of a new and strange trial, or beg for some fiery ordeal to put the seal of heroism upon his constancy. The more truly we are aware of the solemn purposes of life, the height of its possibilities, and the poorness of our achievement, the more truly, I believe, we shall give care to guard ourselves from the beginnings of evil, and pray that we may not be put too severely to the test, and that our strength may be just "as our day." As we go on in life we gain, I trust, modesty with self-knowledge; and we learn that we have not passed as scatheless as perhaps we thought, through occasions on which we believed our virtue had shown itself incorruptible. We learn, for example, that familiarity with the externals of vice (even the satire or the invective which exposes, under the plea of denouncing) may gain power to efface the sharpness of moral destinctions, and set up a mental temptation to impurity of thought.

The prayer, "Lead us not into temptation," was given to his disciples by one who had not long before passed through a long and terrible conflict; that setting of the purpose of his life full in view; that conquest over meaner alternatives; that hardening of the soul to bear, whichh as come down to us in figurative guise, in the account of the Temptation in the desert. Jesus, "tempted in all points like as we are," had, besides, temptations entailed by the very loftiness of his aims, inseparable from the life that determines to be, before all things, spiritual and beneficent. There are some modern exponents of what is called the Higher Christian life, who profess to have attained absolute immunity from temptation. Jesus, who has just passed through the fiery trial—who has dared to think that the Father, well pleased, has marked him as a son—teaches us to pray that God's good guidance may not bring us through the same way of terrible discipline. The bravest soldier does not talk lightly of the battle where he was in the thickest of the fight; he would rather it were not mentioned; the horror of it is more present to his mind than the glory. It was the conscience that knows the anguish of moral struggle, the weariness of the long watch over motive and desire; it was the pure heart that, knowing the brightness of the Father's face, knew also how dark are the shades that seem to shut out his presence from the soul of man, that prayed not to be led into temptation, and again, in the final crisis, that the cup might pass from him. I cannot think that the one prayer more than the other marks a defect of constancy or of resignation.

We do not ask God for exemption from the trials of life, or pray that we may spend our days within some charmed circle where grief cannot touch us. We have a dim feeling that trials, when they come, will drive the soul to find its refuge in God:—but, in the anticipation of them, the most distinct feeling is that of our own weakness. If we do not know that absolute consternation which the sudden vivid thought of change, trial, bereavement brings when it drops, as it were, into our minds out of a clear sky, yet we know that all our theories of sorrow, our philosophies of discipline, are very hard to apply in our own cases. We cannot use as a prophylactic such consolation as may help to heal the wound once given; we should hate our own heartlessness if we could. We know that there are sorrows which, as time goes on, we must face; there will be inevitable partings; there will be changes such as time must bring. But we do not welcome them; we do not calculate the benefits of a godly sorrow, or estimate the advantage to our characters of the 'peaceable fruits" which it may bring; for

> "Who shall so forecast the years,
> And find in loss a gain to match,
> And reach a hand through time to catch
> The far-off interest of tears?"

We may have marked with wonder the refining influence of bodily suffering, and noticed how the quiet graces of a trustful disposition have been born from the constraint and patience of a long illness. Yet none of us can calmly

MONTHLY MEETING OF

PROTESTANT DISSENTING MINISTERS

OF WARWICKSHIRE AND NEIGHBOURING COUNTIES.

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Received of Rev. G. E. Evans *the sum of* —

Pound, Twelve *Shillings and* Six *Pence,*

subscription for the year 1895, as below.

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contemplate the possibility of being subject to fierce onslaught of bodily pain; we dread the loss of self control, the hours when resolution flees, and the sufferer cannot even think; still more terrible if mental anguish be added; and if, beneath the pressure of both combined, Jesus himself felt as if he had dropped out of the everlasting arms, and even God had forsaken him—which of us can steel his heart and say "I shall never be moved?"

And similarly, I know not how a man who has known something of temptation and struggle, who knows that it is to himself sometimes almost a miracle that he has held his own way as he has, can calmly contemplate the advent of some crisis of temptation, some darkest hour of moral strife. We know that such hours and such crises come. The men we meet in business do not say, "By the mercy of God, I am an honest man still, to-day," but do we not know the widespread reality of the struggle and the effort to keep upon the line of righteousness and honour? We see, every now and then, the quiet course of professional life abruptly broken off; we see vacant places on 'Change; names are silently struck off the roll of honourable men; and these things bring the fact very near to us, and we wonder "whose turn next?" and we mutter, "Lord, is it I?"

It is a blessed thing that God brings into the world with every generation a new inspiration of moral ambition, a perpetually fresh reinforcement of spirit and hope and courage for the old battle of right against wrong. The fresh heart of innocence, the eagerness of moral enthusiasm, runs long and is not weary, walks long and is not faint. But the feet grow weary, and the way seems monotonous, and things lightly thrown off at first begin to lay their weight upon the soul. The modesty that comes of self-knowledge, though somewhat bitter in the acquisition, may guard us from the peril of "him that thinketh he standeth," and middle age—aye, oftener perhaps than youth—may humbly acknowledge its need of God's help and guidance, and pray, "Lead us not into temptation."

There is no more sign of a shallow mind than the habit of seeing always the ludicrous side of things, for the ludicrous is always on the surface.

Historic Notes on Midland Churches.

NOTES ON THE HISTORY OF THE MONTHLY MEETING OF PROTESTANT DISSENTING MINISTERS OF WARWICKSHIRE AND NEIGHBOURING COUNTIES.

PART I.

Last year I made a *precis* in my common-place book of the well kept minutes of the monthly meeting, beginning with the first entry dated 7th May, 1782. In reading it over afterwards, I thought some of the items might, with interest, appear in this series of historical papers.

The dinner has always been a feature of the meeting. The first reference to it is on 2nd December, 1783, when, at Wolverhampton, after a sermon by the Rev. Richard Amner, the secretary writes, "we dined at Mr. Pearson's." On 5th November, 1807, the brethren "dined at Dr. Toulmin's;" on 7th June, 1809, they "dined with Rev. R. Kell, at the village of Harbourn." Amongst the names of the ministers who frequently dined their fellows is that of the Rev. John Kentish, who, from the first recorded dinner at his house on 8th March, 1809, to the last on 5th March, 1850, entertained the brethren no less than 23 times. Thoughtful as some of our laymen are in this respect, I fancy it would be hard to beat this record of hospitality on the part of one minister. Nor does Mr. Kentish stand alone in this matter. Benjamin Carpenter often entertained at Old Swinford, so did Timothy Davis at Evesham, Robert Kell at Bordesley, and James Yates at "Islington." Amongst the laymen who early availed themselves of the privilege of offering hospitality to their ministers was Mr. Samuel Rogers, "of the Five Ways, near Birmingham," who died on 25th June, 1820, and is noted in the minutes as "eminent for his piety, integrity, and benevolence, and a friend to civil and religious liberty. His kind attention to the ministers has been often noticed in the preceding pages." He seems to have begun his good habit of "entertaining" in 1809, and to have regularly kept it up until his death. The excellent idea also of a "common" meal, such as that of the last two years at the Old Meeting Church, Birmingham, had its fore-runners in 1821 and 1824, when, at Wolverhampton, the brethren "dined together at Peacock Inn."

I have failed to find any record whatever of Dr. Priestley being present at these meetings. The only time his name appears is in the minute dated 14th July, 1791:—"*In the evening the Old and New Meetings in Birmingham were destroyed by a mob, together with the house of Dr. Priestley, his goods, apparatus, library, and manuscripts.*"

He was, however, the second preacher at the Dudley Double Lecture in 1780, and "prayed" at that in 1788, when the Revs. Samuel Griffiths and William Severn preached. In 1782 and 1784 he was second preacher at the Oldbury Double Lecture, his colleagues being respectively the Revs. Crab and Griffiths.

At the centenary celebration in 1882, the Rev. Henry McKean gave his recollections of the ministers walking to Oldbury from Birmingham, and that "those who went from Wolverhampton to Cradley assembled at Dudley, as far as they could by coach, and then walked." Inclement weather then, would largely deter the brethren from attending the meeting, and we find constant reference to this in the early minutes: *e.g.*, "4th March, 1783, Stourbridge, prevented meeting by the inclemency of the season;" 7th December, 1785, Coseley, "Rev. W. Wood did not come till the service was nearly concluded, on account of the inclemency of the weather, which entirely prevented Rev. Mr. Griffiths from coming;" and on 7th March, 1786, the secretary writes, "the extreme severity of the weather prevented my brethren and myself meeting at Wolverhampton according to appointment, the consequence of which was, Bro. Griffiths was obliged to preach himself."

Fines and forfeits were not unknown. At Coseley, on 9th February, 1790, there was "no publick service. My brethren and myself agreed to meet together at our monthly interviews, quarter before eleven, or forfeit sixpence, and in case of absence to forfeit one shilling." This rule was "recognised and confirmed" at Dudley on 10th August following, on which occasion also there was "no public service."

The first occasion on which the sermon gave place to discussion would seem to be that on 7th December, 1790, at Coseley, when "Divine Influences" was "the subject of conversation," which was continued at Wolverhampton on 7th February, 1791. The "propriety of introducing liturgies into publick worship" was considered at Dudley, on 7th February, 1792, there being "no publick service" that day.

GEO. EYRE EVANS.

(*To be continued next month.*)

A Modern Pilgrim of the Infinite.*

(Spoken at the Old Meeting Church, Birmingham, on Easter Sunday Evening).

One of the most delightful books of the day is the autobiography of Frances Power Cobbe. Miss Cobbe is an Irish lady, with many Irish characteristics—wit, gaiety, vivacity, combined with that genius for religion which marks the Irish people. Of late years she has been known to the public chiefly as the founder and Honorary Secretary of the Anti-Vivisection League, and it is largely owing to her exertions that Vivisection in this country has been placed under legal control. But her labours on behalf of the brute creation are only a small part of her public services. One of Mary Carpenter's band of helpers at Bristol, she was for some time the exponent in the press of the claims of industrial schools and other kindred institutions. Later on she was identified with the Woman's Rights movement, and the improved position of women, educationally and before the law, owes much to her eloquent, shrewd, and untiring advocacy. Side by side with these labours she lived the life of a busy journalist. She travelled much, saw many lands and people, and knew almost every notable person of her time. An omnivorous reader, a constant student, she was—happily we may say she *is*—one of the most brilliant and charming representatives of the cultured women of the 19th century.

Yet all this, interesting and delightful as it makes the record of her life, is of secondary place and importance compared with her religious experiences. Her best work after all, and that which has had the most influence, is the part she has played in Religious Re-construction. I do not say that her religious, philosophical, and ethical writings are destined to an immortal life, but among the forces that have helped to mould the thought and save the faith of thousands of doubting, seeking,

* Life of Frances Power Cobbe, by Herself, in two vols. London Bentley and Son.

earnest, troubled souls, during the last 40 years, her books have played a conspicuous part. It is, however, the story of her own spiritual experience I find to be even more instructive than anything she wrote. To know the real soul-history of any human being is much, but to have unveiled to us the travail, the despair, the hopes, the moods, the spiritual crises of a soul like that of Frances Power Cobbe is a sacred privilege we cannot value too highly, pouring, as it does, a flood of light on the religious movements of our day.

One feature of peculiar interest in Miss Cobbe's religious experience is its *modernity*. She is not a saint of some earlier age planted by mistake in this; she is not the typical saint of the church—retired, ascetic, sad-eyed, submissive, self-abased, morbid, unpractical. She is of her time, a genuine daughter of the 19th century, overflowing with vitality, alive to all the joys and interests of human life, full of fun and laughter, sharing in a thousand activities; an open-eyed, warm-hearted woman, loving knowledge, following truth at all hazards, living a rich, useful, happy life, irradiated by a sunny wit, and strongly held in an even course by the great ideas—God, Duty, Immortality. To my mind she is typical of the modern saint; a Pilgrim of the Infinite, who found in the life and affairs of the finite a veritable Jacob's ladder set up from earth to heaven,—who, living an outer life of great activity and manifold interests, lived yet more vividly and ardently, an inner life of prayer, divine communion, great ideas and spiritual affections, faithful in all to the pole-star of duty, the light of reason, and to an intense God-consciousness.

In her progress from the old narrow orthodoxy to a broader and more rational faith; in her change from Church of England Evangelicalism to a simple Christian Theism, Miss Cobbe pictures for us the experience of many who have gone through or are passing through a similar revolution. Brought up in the straightest sect of evangelical orthodoxy Miss Cobbe was fortunate in being surrounded by its best types. Her parents were high-minded, sincere, devout, upright people, adorning the narrow world of evangelical ideas with an earnest piety which early made its mark on an eager, sensitive, and impressionable child. Miss Cobbe's ancestors had been closely connected with the Church in Ireland. "We had," she says, "Five archbishops and a bishop among our near kindred —Cobbe's, Beresford's, and Trench's"—and her father's brother was a clergyman. She was in fact the first heretic ever known among them. Her earliest recollections are of religion—kneeling at her mother's knee repeating the Lord's Prayer. There was the usual collect, catechism, and hymn learning of such families; a strict Sabbath observance; family prayer and other religious exercises saturating the round of daily life with the holiest impressions. Her nature was a favourable soil for such seed; it took root and quickly grew apace. From the first she was a very religious child, easily moved and excited by religious ideas, and although in after years she gave up the creed of her childhood she never ceased to be thankful for the influences that surrounded her in early days. "Later on," she writes, "the evils which belong to this evangelical training, the excessive self-introspection and self-consciousness, made themselves painfully felt, but in early years there was nothing that was not perfectly wholesome in the religion which I had so readily assimilated."

It was a happy childhood in which the love of God was as natural as the love of parents. She records as one of her most delightful reminiscences the reading aloud by her father of "Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress," her own riveted and enchanted attention, and the indelible impression it left on her mind that life is just a pilgrimage from earth to heaven.

It was at the age of eleven that the first doubt and difficulty arose. It was over the miracle of the Loaves and Fishes. Here is her own account: "I can recall the scene vividly. It was a winter's night, my father was reading the Sunday evening sermon in the dining room. The servants, whose attendance was *de rigeur*, were seated in a row down the room. My father faced them, and my mother and I and my governess sat round the fire near him. As I listened with all my might to the sermon which described the miracle I began cheerfully to think, 'How did it happen exactly?' quite imagining I was doing the right thing to try to understand it all. Well! first there was the fishes and the loaves. But what was done to

them? Did the fish grow and grow as they were eaten and broken? And the bread the same? No! That is nonsense. And then the twelve baskets full taken up at the end when there was not nearly so much at the beginning! It is not possible. O, Heavens (was the next thought), I am doubting the Bible! God forgive me! I must never think of it again."

Is not that graphic? Does it not describe the sort of thing felt by many young minds—not perhaps at quite as early an age, but when thought begins first to move independently? And then the shuddering pull up, as if to think a doubt were a sin, followed by the resolute shutting of the mind in a sort of vague fear of something dreadful happening.

This closing of the mind appears to have lasted until the girl was nearly seventeen. During those years she went through various religious moods, more like the story of some absorbed, ecstatic nun than the experiences of a girl at a fashionable Brighton school. She says of herself: "Religion became the chief interest of my life, and the sense that I was pardoned its greatest joy." To read one of the gospels through before breakfast appears to have been a favourite recreation. Religion was summed-up in pardon through the atonement of Jesus and at death to enter Heaven. But disturbing thoughts could not for ever be kept out of the mind. How did anybody know all that story of Galilee to be true? How could we believe the miracles? She writes: "I had read very carefully Gibbon's xv. and xvi. chapters, and other books enough to teach me that everything in historical Christianity had been questioned, and there my own awakening critical, and reasoning, and above all, ethical faculties supplied fresh crops of doubts of the truth of the story, and of the morality of much of the Old Testament history, and of the scheme of the atonement itself."

Then followed four anxious, pitiful, heart-breaking years. With no one to whom she dared speak of her doubts, she faced the great problems of the soul in solitude. Now everything was dark, and now she would accuse herself of the greatest criminalty in harbouring doubts, and fling herself on her knees in a passion of repentance. Brought up to believe in the verbal inspiration of every word of the Bible and to adore Christ as "Very God of very God," all the light seemed quenched out of the sky when these beliefs were shaken. Taught that the highest motive to be good was the hope of Heaven—all reason for being good seemed to vanish when Heaven disappeared like the "baseless fabric of a vision." In those days there seemed no alternative between the evangelical faith and rank infidelity. "In short my poor young soul was in a dreadful dilemma. On the one hand I had the choice to accept a whole mass of dogmas against which my reason and conscience rebelled; on the other, to abandon those dogmas and strive no more to believe the incredible or to revere what I instinctively condemned; and then, as a natural sequel, to cast aside the laws of duty which I had hitherto cherished, to cease to pray, and to relinquish the hope of a life beyond the grave."

Imagine the inward conflict going on for years accompanied by frequent spasms of self-reproach and painful self-tormentings, and without a soul in whom to confide—keeping it all a dread secret from parents and friends.

"At last my efforts to believe in orthodox Christianity ceased altogether. In the summer after my twenty-eighth birthday I had reached the end of the long struggle. The complete downfall of evangelicalism—which seems to have been effected in George Elliot's strong brain in a single fortnight of intercourse with Mr. and Mrs. Bray—had taken in my case four long years of miserable mental conflict and unspeakable pain. It left me with something as nearly like a *Tabula rasa* of faith as can well be imagined. I definitely disbelieved in human immortality and in a supernatural revelation. The existence of a God I neither denied nor affirmed. I felt I had no means of coming to any knowledge of Him. I was in fact long before the word was invented, precisely an Agnostic!"

Having thus followed her out into the wilderness of negation, the wilderness where nothing green is to be seen, no flower by the wayside, no blade of grass, no leafy shade, nothing but barren sand, let us notice the path by which she was led—*not back again—but on through the wilderness* into a land of green pastures and still waters. There were three inward and three outward experiences following one upon another

which were mile-stones as it were upon her pilgrimage. The first was the conviction rising up amid the ruins of faith that after all Duty is binding and sacred and absolutely the best. For as she wandered in the wilderness she was conscious of a certain moral deterioration—a falling down of the ideals of conduct, and a lowering of the tone of character by which she was much distressed. At last something stirred within her and seemed to say, "Can you not rise once more, conquer your faults, and live up at least to your own idea of what is good and right? Even though there be no life after death, you may yet deserve your own respect here and now, and if there be a God He must approve the effort." That was a memorable day. The advance to a nobler faith began in the awakening of the sense of duty for duty's sake, irrespective of all considerations of future rewards and punishments. The new start was made from ethics. Thirty years after she found her own experiences described in Mr. Stopford Brooke's *Life of Robertson*—"It is an awful moment when the soul begins to find that the props on which it blindly rested are many of them rotten. . . . . I know but one way in which a man can come forth from the agony scathless; it is by holding fast to those things which are certain still. In the darkest hour through which a human soul can pass, whatever else is doubtful, this at least is certain. If there be no God, and no future state, even then it is *better to be generous than selfish, better to be true than false, better to be brave than a coward.* Blessed beyond all earthly blessedness is the man who in the tempestuous darkness of the soul has dared to hold fast to these landmarks." The return of the soul upon the sanctity of Duty—the necessity of loyalty to the Right and True, has been for a great host as sunlight upon the path.

The second inward experience as flowing out of the first, was the possibility again of prayer. Without any attempt to define God, the conviction grew up with the sense of duty, that at least he must be, if he be at all, the Lord of conscience. Faith in prayer came back with faith in duty. It could not be wrong to ask God to strengthen good resolutions, to forgive faults, the show the way the feet ought to go. It was through her moral instincts that Frances Power Cobbe was led straight on to religion, and in the heat of ethical fervour that God once more became the great Reality. It is a significant step in the pilgrimage of faith—the need of prayer arising out of a sense of moral failure,—ethical ideas, loyally followed, leading to faith in a God who is the hearer of prayer, whose voice is duty, whose throne is conscience.

By and by, after years of earnest, faithful following of the light, another step was taken. The Lord of Conscience became the God of Love. Let me here give the story in Miss Cobbe's own touching words:—"One day, while praying quietly, my thought of God was lifted to a higher plane by one of those inflowings of truth which seem the simplest things in the world, but are as rain on the dry ground in summer to the mind which receives them. In the act of prayer the thought came to me with extraordinary lucidity. God's goodness is what *I mean* by goodness. It is not a mere title like the 'majesty' of a king. He has really that character which we call 'good.' He is just as I understand justice, only more perfectly just. He is good as I understand goodness, only more perfectly good. He is not good in time, and tremendous in eternity; not good to some of his creatures and cruel to others, but wholly, eternally, universally good."

It was a thought which changed her attitude towards God from one of mere reverence into one of vivid love. It gave the Christian note to her Theism. It brought the conviction in its train that Love is all in all, Lord and King, Sun and Shield; that to love is infinitely more than a forced obedience from a sense of duty; that Love is greater than knowledge, and is the secret of the soul's true life.

The three outward influences which conspired with her inward experiences to lead her into the light were three books, *Blanco White's Life and Meditations, F. W. Newman's The Soul*, and *Theodore Parker's Discourse on Religion.* The latter especially marked an epoch in her life. She had already arrived by independent thought at the various conclusions of Parker's *Discourse, i.e.*, the absolute goodness of God and the non-veracity of popular Christianity. But a flood of light and a wonderful strength of assurance came with Parker's way of putting things. Especially his idea that Inspiration is not an isolated and

miraculous thing, but a permanent and universal element in human life, that all true thought is by a Divine inflowing of mental Light, that God speaks to-day as truly as in olden time, that there is a direct Divine teaching not dependent on history or authority which the soul may receive for itself, this planted her feet as upon a rock.

But all these experiences had gone on in solitude. At last came the time for open avowal. Her mother had died at the darkest moment of her soul-struggle, when faith in immortality had disappeared, and she had no choice but to think that the most beautiful soul she had ever known had actually *ceased to be.* After her mother's death she told her father where she stood, the full extent of her departure from the old faith, and a terrible blow it was to him. So affected was he that he banished her from the home for nearly a year. He wrote to her twice or thrice in that time, and said that if her doubts only extended in certain directions he could bear with them, "but if I rejected Christ and disbelieved the Bible, a man was called upon to keep the plague of such opinions from his own house." He required a definite answer from her upon those points. As the answer was that his daughter did not believe that Christ was God, and did not believe in the Infallibility of the Bible, he ceased communication with her. Not a friend had sympathy with her. She was absolutely alone. Sore and wounded she went one day for a walk by the river, and in her trouble of soul threw herself on the ground, and buried her face in the grass. "As I did so my lips touched a primrose, and the soft, sweet flower which I had in childhood chosen for my mother's birthday garland seemed actually to kiss my face." It was to her soul like the kiss of God.

For the rest of the story I must refer you to the book itself—how she came back to her father's house tolerated, but all the time in a sort of moral Coventry, under an always present cloud of disapprobation—how it was borne in upon her that she must do something to help other souls from passing through the moral crucifixion which had been her lot for a dozen years—how a happy-hearted faith possessed all her after-life, inspiring her with trust in God and love and hope and generous service, and wide thoughts of man, how her writings have been to many a light shining in a dark place, how in old age she suffered a second martyrdom in the compassion for the brute creation which led her to found and carry on the Anti-Vivisection movement; how Theist and Unitarian as she was, she had for friends and fellow workers such opposite men as Lord Shaftesbury, Cardinal Manning, John Stuart Mill, Benjamin Jowett, Tennyson, and Dean Stanley; how for years she lived among England's noblest and best, a bright, inspiring influence—all this must be omitted.

Two short significant scenes and sentences from this fascinating life must suffice. One is the last interview Miss Cobbe had with Tennyson. "When I rose to leave he shook hands with me as we were parting, as we supposed, for that season, he said to me, 'Goodbye, Miss Cobbe, fight the good fight. Go on! Fight the good fight!' I saw him no more, but I shall do his bidding, please God, to the end"

The second is from the death-bed of her dear friend, Emily Shaen, who had been an invalid for 20 years. "I often said that *I went to church* to her sick room. In her last days, when utterly crushed by incessant suffering and by the death of her beloved husband and favourite son, she bore in whispers to me (she could scarcely speak for mortal weakness) this testimony to our common faith, 'I sent for you—to tell you—*I am more sure than ever that God is good.*'"

This story of a soul that went down into the darkness of doubt, darkness as of the grave, and came up again into the light, is a fitting resurrection study for our Easter Day.

JOSEPH WOOD.

Infinite toil would not enable you to sweep away a mist; but by ascending a little you may often look over it altogether. So it is with our moral improvement; we wrestle fiercely with a vicious habit, which would have no hold upon us if we ascended into a higher moral atmosphere.

James Martineau.

[Dr. Martineau reached the age of ninety on April 21st.]

James Martineau has been for many years the high-priest of thought to the whole of English-speaking Christianity. No earlier generation of Englishmen has been able to confront the philosophy of unbelief with an answer so clear and complete as that with which he has provided us. Finality in such a matter is perhaps unattainable, but judging him by the standard of other leaders of thought, it is fair to say that no English thinker has laboured with equal success to give a reasonable basis for those great positive truths which underlie the battle-ground of the sects. Working from the base of pure logic, he has given an affirmative answer to the all-inclusive question "Can we know God?" Thanks to him the intellect need no longer be afraid of affirming that the relation of God to man is that of person to person, and parent to child. He has defended the moral responsiblity of man to God, and thus placed ethics on a religious basis. He has defined the grounds on which we may hope for a life beyond the grave, not merely repeating the time-worn answers, but treating this tremendous problem with an instructed and candid reference to the demands of current scientific thought. Other champions of the faith have undertaken these tasks before him, and many of them have rendered invaluable service; but James Martineau has worked from a base which gives a world of added significance to his teaching. They have usually confronted the enemy from behind the breastwork of a belief in historical revelation; he, on the other hand, has fought the battle on the open ground of plain reason. Where others appeal to scripture or revelation, he appeals to the natural constitution of the human mind and the known order of the universe. He has thus encountered the scientific scepticism of our time on its own ground.

In the pulpits of the various orthodox churches Martineau's name is mentioned with reservation; but his philosophy is a usual subject of study in their schools, and many a stiff professor of a stiff creed keeps "The Study of Religion" on the most prominent of his library shelves, as his permanent and favourite antidote against doubt. Occasionally, however, there have been outbursts of denunciation. He has been-styled an iconoclast, a destructive force, a cold rationalist; some person, in a strange access of absurdity, called him an agnostic. The most common form of accusation brought against him is one to which all Unitarians are well accustomed; it is that his teaching is "negative." That there is some slight colour for such a charge cannot be denied, and it is worth while to consider what it is in order to perceive how little it is. Of current doctrines, the number denied by Unitarians is certainly in excess of those affirmed. Taking ten of the more important of the Thirty-nine Articles we find that eight of these are uniformly denied by Unitarians and two uniformly affirmed. Thus it would appear in the eyes of a good Churchman that Martineau's negations are to his affirmations as four to one. Therefore, he is a negative teacher. But a saner mode of reasoning at once reminds us that the quality of positiveness does not consist in the number of things believed, but in the intensity, the directness, the seriousness with which a man believes what he does believe. It may be that the essence of Martineau's teaching is compressible into the brief compass of the two propositions, that God is a person, and that man has moral relationships with God; but the intellectual earnestness with which these beliefs are held, the concientiousness with which they are reasoned out, the directness with which they are applied to conduct constitute Martineau the most positive teacher of our time.

The key to the drift and meaning of a teacher lies ultimately in his personality, in his temperament, in the type of passion to which his mind is subject. Two words will serve to suggest the leading characteristics in the present case—intellectual and ethical.

As to the first, no reader of Martineau will doubt that the desire to have things explained and logically ordered is dominant in the mind of this teacher. The love of proof amounts to an intellectual passion. The demand that each matter shall be analysed to its ultimate elements has all the force of a sacred obligation. Both as theologian and politician he will be a party to no vague undertakings. The reason must guide the emotions. No convenient fictions may be allowed to cover the real facts of life; no desire to make

things pleasant all round can blind him to those stern moral necessities which are eternally present to man. In his philosophy this temperament shows itself in a sufficient sense of the tragic aspect of the world, and in a willingness to accept the fact of conflict as divinely ordained. In social and political affairs it comes forth as a dislike of "sickly idealisms," and as a refusal to entertain enthusiasms which lack either logical foundation or working mechanism. Ideas which have no defined boundaries, movements which proceed from a vague sense that something must be done have never found a supporter in James Martineau, nor has the plea of good intentions materially improved the reception of which they have always been sure at his hands.

There are philosophers who care nothing for the results of thought, taking pleasure only in the process of thought itself. To them it is a matter of indifference whether God exists or no, whether the power behind nature be a Person or a blind unconscious energy. They delight in following the subtle turns of thought, they find a pleasing excitement in the task of tracking their way amid the complex mazes of metaphysical speculation. They play with truth as a juggler plays with glass balls. Some maintain that this mood of indifference is alone proper to the thinker; but the results of thought so obtained are never taken with sufficient seriousness to be a motive to conduct.

This is a well-known type of intellectual temperament, and it is here described because in James Martineau we have a mind of a precisely opposite cast. His eye is too seriously fixed on the goal to be overmuch concerned with the process. A grave sense of responsibility for the answer accompanies his thought. What may be termed the artistic interest in philosophy does not appear to move him. It is not his object to divert a giant intellect with the athletic exercises of metaphysics; he wants an answer to the question "does God exist?" And when Martineau has answered that question in the affirmative his mind feels the weight of the conclusion. He is not one of those thinkers who, when they have worked out their system, would hesitate to stake a week's income on its truthfulness. He gives one the impression of a thinker who believes in his own results. The infinite sanction of duty once demonstrated, the demonstration is to him as solid rock. You may build your life upon it; you may stake earth and heaven upon it. This proof, this conclusion, this frail structure of thought, which seems to some minds as though the slightest breath would dissolve its tremulous outlines into thin air, has for Martineau the irresistible reality of adamant. This is the distinctive mark of his intellectual temperament. Gifted with this power of stern and enthusiastic belief in the results of philosophical enquiry, he is able to feel the cogency of intellectual truth as an incentive to action.

This leads us to the ethical side of his temperament. We have here a reminiscence of that Huguenot stock from which he is descended. The conception of duty presides throughout. His published writings are, of course, only the lesser manifestations of this prevailing instinct, but the carefully elaborated style, the minute thoroughness of treatment, the amazing energy of thought which these writings display are eloquent indications of the strong ethical instincts of the writer. The classical series of philosophical works which Martineau gave to the world after he had passed his eightieth year constitute an instance of sustained endeavour almost without a parallel in our literature. Such an achievement presupposes a lifetime of moral discipline.

This ethical element is the fountain-head of Martineau's distinctively religious teaching. His theology is an ethical theism. His God-consciousness is the fruit of his moral intuitions. Herein this great teacher shows himself a true Puritan. It is worth noting that in his last published volume of "Home Prayers" he addresses the Deity with the appellation of "Taskmaster," an epithet which strikes the key-note of the Puritan conception of God and which it may be remembered occurs with such significant emphasis in Milton's sonnet on "His being arrived to the Age of Twenty-three." We cannot deny that a theology which insists too frequently on this side of the divine nature is apt to be repellent to a large order of minds; it is even open to the charge of serious limitations; but it carries an intensity of moral strength which makes it peculiarly fit for the building-up of great and consecrated personalities. To minds of this type—and they address us from every page of Martineau's work—conscience is the supreme and momentously significant Word of God to man. It

is the meeting point of the Infinite and the finite minds; it is God in man; it is the answer to the question "how to live." Though conscience does not conflict with the understanding, yet it is not thence derived; still less may we seek for its origin in the promptings of appetite or prudence. Man's moral nature is ultimate and irreducible, and explicable not by looking downward to the animal but by looking upward to the Divine. Man has only to nurture his conscience by obedience and it will unfold its meaning; he will learn to recognise it as the voice of God.

But intellectual and moral greatness, however developed, do not sufficiently account for the position of one whom the whole world recognizes as a *religious* teacher. A picture drawn in these colours does not answer the test of Neander's famous canon; "it is the heart that makes the theologian." Without passion, emotion, love, no theologian can ever be. But the passion which is here demanded need not belong to the type of which men can give no rational account. There is such a thing as moral passion, ethical emotion, enthusiasm for justice, reverential love of the right and the true. It is not a common phenomenon (would that it were!), but whenever it appears it proves itself the steadiest, the strongest, the least demonstrative, and yet the most effectual of all the springs of action. It does not preclude the existence of wide sensibility in regard to other matters, but rather gives the warrant of sanity to the entire range of our emotional experience. It is the quickener of all that is tender, sober, and beautiful in human life. It is the electric light of passion, capable alike of the keenest and the softest radiance. As the peculiar attribute of the Puritan mind it has left us in Milton's "Paradise Lost" one of the noblest works of art existing in the world. And, as the deepest characteristic of Dr. Martineau's mind, it has taught the note of tenderness to the most searching philosophic voice that has spoken in England, has lent force to its reasoning, has clothed its eloquence with the splendours of poetry, and, in short, turned a complete system of philosophy into a kindling plea for the righteousness of God.

L. P. JACKS.

"Where is your God?" they say:
Answer them, Lord most holy;
Reveal thy secret way
Of visiting the lowly;
Not wrapped in moving cloud,
Or nightly-resting fire;
But veiled within the shroud
Of silent high desire.

Come not in flashing storm,
Or bursting frown of thunder:
Come in the viewless form
Of wakening love and wonder;
Of duty, grown divine,
The restless spirit, still;
Of sorrows taught to shine,
As shadows of Thy will.

O God the pure alone—
E'en in their deep confessing,—
Can see thee as their own,
And find the perfect blessing:
Yet to each waiting soul,
Speak in Thy still small voice
Till broken love's made whole,
And saddened hearts rejoice.

JAMES MARTINEAU, 1873.

The Three Students.

(*From the German.*)

There came three students from over the Rhine,
To a certain good hostel they turned them for wine.

"Ho! Landlady, have you good wine and beer?
How fareth the Fraulein, your daughter dear?"

"My beer is fresh, and my wine is bright;
My child will be shrouded and buried to-night."

They drew the door of her death-room back:
There she slept in her coffin black:—

The first he lifted the veil from the dead,
And bared his curls, and bended, and said:—

"Ah! couldst thou but live again, maiden, here,
From this day forth, I would love thee dear!"

The second spread softly the face-cloth again,
And his tears fell fast as the midsummer rain:

"Dead, art thou, Lisbeth? Cold, lip and brow?
Oh, God! I learn how I loved thee now!"

But the third in his hand did the little hand take,
And kissed the white forehead, and smiled, and spake:

"I love thee to-day as I loved thee before,
I shall love thee as truly for evermore."

E. A.

THE CHILDREN'S PAGE.

Golden Hair.

Golden Hair sat on her grandfather's knee ;
Dear little Golden Hair, tired was she ;
All the day busy as busy could be.

Up in the morning as soon as 'twas light ;
Out with the birds and the butterflies bright ;
Flitting about till the coming of night.

Grandfather toyed with the curls on her head ;
"What has my baby been doing?" he said,
"Since she arose with the Sun from her bed?"

"Pitty much," answered the sweet little one ;
"I cannot tell, so much things have I done—
Played with my dolly, and feeded my bun."

"And I have jumped with my little jump rope ;
And then I made out of water and soap
Bufitle worlds, mamma's castles of hope."

"Then I have readed in my picture book ;
And little Bella and I went to look
For some smooth stones by the side of the brook."

"Then I comed home and I eated my tea,
And I climbed up on my grandpa's knee ;
And I'm jes' as tired as tired can be."

Nearer and nearer the little head pressed,
Until it drooped upon grandfather's breast ;
Dear little Golden Hair, sweet be thy rest.

We are but children ; the things that we do
Are as sports of a babe to the Infinite view :
That sees all our weakness and pities it too.

God grant that when night overshadows our way,
And we shall be called to account for the day,
He may find it guileless as Golden Hair's play.

And oh, when aweary, may we be so blest,
As to sink like an innocent child to our rest,
And feel ourselves clasped to the Infinite breast.

The Swallow.

The swallow is one of those birds that come and go with the warm weather. Its twitter is generally heard about our windows in the first half of April, and it stays till the middle of September, unless the weather be rather cold and cheerless.

The swallow is a very beautiful little creature. The light chestnut feathers of the forehead shade gradually into a deep blue which forms a glossy coat for the upper parts of the body and wings. The darker feathers of the tail are patched with white. The under parts are lighter, as usual, with a very deep blue sash across the top of the chest. The stockings and boots are as black as the beak.

The swallow likes to dwell with man, and often does it find shelter under the same roof. It places its nest near the eaves of our houses, where it will be quite safe from wind and rain ; sometimes it builds in a disused chimney, especially if it can get the benefit of the warmth of a neighbouring flue that is not disused ; sometimes it takes up its abode in the shaft of a disused mine or well. Like the eagle and the rook, the swallow is very fond of the spot where it makes its home ; if it return in the spring and find the house of its rearing in ruins, it laments as dolefully as the rook does over the fallen tree in the boughs of which it had built its nest and lived.

The nest of the swallow is not built with very great skill. It is made of a number of lumps or loads of mud or clay, which the bird brings and dots down together till the shell is at last roughly formed. The lining is made of softer materials, chiefly grasses. Such a nest we very often see sticking against the wall of a house. The little creature fixes its sharp claws upon any roughness on the bare wall, and presses its tail against the surface ; and thus it clings and works in order to make a start. If any one wish to keep the bird away, he may wash the wall with soap or oil, upon which the mud or clay will not stick.

As the swallows pass to and fro between their nests and the trees and fields, you may observe how swiftly they fly and in what graceful curves they sweep through the air. Often you will see them going home with great mouthfuls of food for their young ones. They live upon insects ; and these they devour as diligently during the day as the bat does during the night. If it were not for the swallows, there might soon be another plague of flies. They consider beetles a great treat, as well as drone bees, which are big plump morsels and have no sting to defend themselves.

If there be two broods in one year, which sometimes happens, the second brood is in danger of being rather unfortunate. The parent birds may stay on into the late season, if the weather be fairly good, but if the weather break before the young swallows are able to fly along, the little fledglings are left to their fate.

Before the swallows take their departure, they assemble in great numbers, as the rooks do in the evening. Are they, too, talking over their affairs? Are they speaking about their journey, about how they have enjoyed themselves through the summer, and about where they are going? Then they separate, and set out upon their southward flight, not in flocks, but in twos and threes. Powerful as their wings are, they not unfrequently are glad to rest upon the masts or yards or deck of a friendly ship, or even, with outstretched pinions, upon the face of the rolling waves. And having obtained a rest and been well fed by the sailors, they spread their wings and hasten on their flight.

Two Parables.

I.

HARMONY OR SILENCE.

The difference in pitch between one note and another is a difference in the number of vibrations to the second. When two notes have the same number of vibrations they are said to synchronise, and if you set one ringing near a stretched string or tuning fork having the same pitch, that is, vibrating the same number of times to a second, the string or tuning fork will be set in motion by the first note without a touch from you. Identical rapidity of motion making the link between the two was what the second string was waiting for and formed its susceptible point.

If you open the piano and sing into it any note you like, the same note and all its octaves will resound, and you will hear too that certain other sounds very closely related to your note (its 3rd and 5th) will ring also, though quite faintly.

A full-sized keyboard has $7\frac{1}{2}$ octaves, and each hammer strikes three strings. Is it not wonderful that out of 180 strings only seven should have answered the call clearly, while 14 others gave but a faint response?

The silence of 159 strings astonishes me more than the resonance of 21, for vibrations are but mechanical motions, and why should not one motion be as effectual as another? With my finger I can set *any* note in vibration, yet that vibration, that motion, can only affect certain notes. I think, when you sang your note into the piano, you would have expected to hear a confused discord arising from the indiscriminate mingling of the vibrations of all its strings, but it was not so. Your note and another was caught up and answered again and again, and low harmonics crept about under it giving it fulness and complexity. No jarring sound was heard. 'Tis strangely human; it looks so like affinity, selection, and preference.

Let us transfer these facts to human life.

When a soul, which shares our aspirations, our ideals, or our affections, is brought into touch with us, be it by word or by deed, or by the written expression of these, that soul sets our soul ringing. We have many names for this synchronising; we call it the kindling of enthusiasm, of love, of reverence, of sympathy, &c. . . . But many and many a soul vibrates at a different rate from ours, and therefore can produce horrible discords in us. Remember that it does not follow that its note is therefore intrinsically a false one; yet, assuredly it would jangle with ours, could it make ours vibrate. Remember, too, that of 180 strings, over which passed the wave of motion, only seven answered unmistakeably, and be prepared for a yet smaller proportion of synchronising to non-synchronising notes in life.

What do most of us do when an unrelated soul is brought close to our lives? I fear that every fibre of our being rings out its protest, and a hideous jangle is the result.

What does the piano do when an unrelated note sweeps over all but 21 of its strings? It is merely silent; it has strong preferences and deep silences, but no loud hatreds.

If we followed its example in our relations to our fellow-men our lives would be full of two things only, each most beautiful, each the necessary correlative of the other. We should fill our world with ringing harmonies, which would alternate with periods of a silence full of peace, of dignity, and of repose.—H. G. B.

(To be Continued.)

News from the Field.

MIDLAND CHRISTIAN UNION.—After long and careful consideration it has been decided to appoint a Missionary Agent, or Minister at Large, for the Midlands. Similar appointments at Manchester and Newcastle-on-Tyne have met with the most encouraging success. The duties of the office will be to assist the aided churches, to open new ground in populous districts, to follow up the work of the Postal Mission, to organise the lay preachers of the district with a view to starting new preaching stations, and to take the oversight of vacant churches like Wolverhampton and Small Heath. We understand that the appointment has been offered to the Rev. John Harrison, of West Bromwich, and it is not unlikely to be accepted by him. Mr. Harrison has done most excellent work at West Bromwich and seems exactly the kind of man to take up this important missionary work. The appointment is made in co-operation with the British and Foreign Unitarian Association.

BANBURY, *Christ-church Chapel.*—On Wednesday evening, March 20th, a successful concert was held in the schoolroom of the above chapel. In the unavoidable absence of Mr. Alderman Shepherd (who had kindly

promised to preside over the meeting) through illness, Mr. Councillor Webb occupied the chair. There was a large attendance of friends, and the following programme was vigorously gone through. Several items elicited considerable applause, and were warmly received by the audience atsembled. At the close the minister (Rev. H. Hill) moved, and Mr. Miles and Mr. Briscoe seconded and supported, a hearty vote of thanks to the performers who had kindly given their services, and to the chairman for presiding over the meeting. Mr. F. T. C. Webb (organist) was the accompanist on the piano.—On Easter Sunday evening, April 14th, in the course of the service, two passages from the Koran were read as lessons, and by way of a sermon an account of the life and teaching of Mahommed was given by Dr. Tyssen, one of the trustees of the chapel. The lecturer told how idolatry prevailed in Arabia, until Mohammed preached faith in one spiritual God, and belief in a future life and the judgment of man by God, laying down at the same time many rules of moral conduct, and inculcating the duties of prayer and the giving of alms. He commenced his mission in Mecca about A.D. 710, and gained some converts, but also incurred the enmity of the principal men of the town. At the end of twelve years some of his best friends died, and his enemies tried to silence him, and he therefore resolved to fly to Medina, where his religion had been accepted more favourably. His enemies discovered his intention, and resolved to kill him, and sent guards to surround his house; but when they arrived to execute their sentence, they found that he had escaped, being warned by his cousin Ali, who had hidden in his bed and deceived the guards. Mohammed had been let down the city wall from the house of one of his friends, named Abubeker, with whom he fled away, and after hiding for some time in a cave, made his way to Medina. There he sustained several severe attacks from the Meccans, who, finding their efforts fruitless, made a truce for ten years with him. During the truce many of the chiefs of Mecca were converted to his faith and joined him at Medina; and after a few years the Meccans broke the truce, and Mahommed thereupon marched to Mecca at the head of his followers. On his approach his principal enemy, named Abu Sofian, came out to meet him, gave up the keys of the town, renounced idolatry, and recognised Mohammed as the Apostle of God. The rest of the Meccans took the same course, and the neighbouring tribes of Arabia quickly followed their example. Thus Mohammed formed them into a single nation, united by a common faith. His life presents a grand drama, and it was really a credit to human nature that such a drama should have been enacted. The Minister (Rev. H. Hill) took the devotional part of the service (except the reading of the lessons by Dr. Tyssen). There was a good congregation present and some bright singing by the choir and congregation.

LYE.—A special service to celebrate the opening of the new classroom was held on Sunday evening, April 7th, when the sermon was preached by the Rev. T. Pipe, of Birmingham. It was followed next day by a social tea and meeting, when addresses were delivered by the Revs. A. W. Timmis and I. Wrigley, and readings were given by Mr. F. Taylor, of Stourbridge. Two violin solos were played by Mr. G. Wassall, and songs were sung by Miss Pardoe, Messrs. Grey, J. Elcock, and H. Pardoe. The following additional contributions to the Extension Fund have been received—Miss L. K. Garrett, London, £2 2s.; Mr. R. Lawford, London, 5s.; Mr. G. Lawford, London, 10s.; Mr. S. R. Kearne, London, 10s.; Lye congregation, collection, £1 8s. 6d.; Mrs. Hingley, Lye, an additional, 2s.; previously acknowledged, £230 13s. 6d.; total, £235 11s.—The anniversary is fixed for May 26th, when sermons will be preached by the Rev. B. Kirkman Gray, of Warwick.

WEST BROMWICH, *Lodge Road Chapel.*—On Sunday evening a special musical service was held at this chapel, when the choir gave a very praiseworthy rendering of Ferdinand Hiller's "Springtime." The whole work was excellently given, but in some parts the choir quite excelled themselves, the attack and general finish which characterised their efforts being most meritorious. The principals were Miss Yeomans, Mrs. Reece, Mr. Richards, and Mr. J. Reynolds, Mr. J. R. Cooke presiding at the organ. There was a large congregation, and at the close of the service a collection was made in aid of the chapel funds.—*Children's Guild.*—The annual entertainment in connection with this Guild was held on Wednesday evening, when there was a very satisfactory attendance. The Rev. J. Harrison presided, and a capital programme was well given and equally well appreciated by the audience. At the close Mr. Harrison explained that the Guild was a working guild, and the friends would be glad to know that a parcel of clothing, made by the members, was sent last October to the Infectious Diseases Hospital. The Guild, it may be added, is under the management of Miss Hettie Greenway and Mrs. Reece, who are heartily to be congratulated upon the work done by the children, and upon the success of the entertainment on Wednesday. The children themselves also deserve a word of commendation for the really admirable way in which they all did their part.

WOLVERHAMPTON.—The recent death of our loved brother here brought me a request from a friend, that I should, if possible, insert in *Seed Sower* a list of the ministers who have laboured at Wolverhampton. My list may not be quite correct, but as it is so I give it:—

John Stubs	here 1701—1740 died
Philip Holland	1748—1754
John Cole	1759—1781
Samuel Griffiths	1782—5 Jan. 1804 d.
Nathaniel (Nicholas?) Shattock, from Ilfracombe	1804—1811 (Dean Row, 1814-17?)
John Steward	1813—1817
Supplies	1817—1830
Stephenson Hunter	1830—1860
Thomas Hugh Marshall Scott, M.A.	1861—1864
Charles Frederick Biss	1865—1870
Edward Myers, F.G.S.	1870—1873
William Agar	1874—1877
William Birks	1878—1882
Closed	1883—autumn 1885
George Henry Smith	1886—1892
Leopold George Harris Crook ...	1892—6 Feb. 1895 d.

Readers are invited to send corrections and insert any omissions.—GEO. EYRE EVANS.